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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7357
INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 15380

E.O. 12356:DECL: OADR
TAGS: PREL KPAL KISL IS
SUBJECT: ISLAMIC JIHAD: TOTAL REJECTION OF PEACE
PROCESS BUT NO VIOLENCE

REF: TEL AVIV 15327

11. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

12. SUMMARY AN ISLAMIC JIHAD ACTIVIST LAID OUT AN UNCOMPROMISING VIEW OF HIS ORGANIZATION'S OPPOSITION TO THE PEACE PROCESS AND FUTURE AIMS. WHILE CRITICAL OF PALESTINIANS ENGAGED IN THE CURRENT DIALOGUE, THE ACTIVIST ASSERTED THAT HIS GROUP WOULD NOT EMPLOY VIOLENCE TO STOP THE PROCESS. END SUMMARY.

13. IN THE EMBASSY'S FIRST CONTACT WITH ISLAMIC JIHAD, POLOFF MET WITH ACTIVIST "MAHMOUD" DURING A NOVEMBER 21 VISIT TO GAZA. THE MEETING WAS ARRANGED THROUGH AN EMBASSY JOURNALIST CONTACT WHO HAS LINKS TO BOTH ISLAMIC JIHAD AND "HAMAS." POLOFF'S JOURNALIST CONTACT TOLD POLOFF THAT HE HAD TRIED TO SET UP MEETINGS WITH ISLAMIC JIHAD REPRESENTATIVES BUT THAT THE ORGANIZATION HAD REFUSED TO MEET WITH AMERICANS. UNBEKNOWNST TO POLOFF AND GAZA JOURNALIST CONTACT, THE ISLAMIC JIHAD ACTIVIST SHOWED UP AT THE JOURNALIST'S OFFICE AFTER POLOFF AND CONTACT HAD RETURNED FROM MEETING "HAMAS" LEADER MAHMOUD AL-ZAHAR. POLOFF TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROBE ABOUT ISLAMIC JIHAD POLICY TOWARD THE PEACE PROCESS.

14. REFUSING TO DIVULGE HIS REAL NAME OR THE BRANCH OF ISLAMIC JIHAD HE BELONGED TO, "MAHMOUD" SAID HIS ORGANIZATION TRADITIONALLY SAW NO BENEFIT TO MEETING WITH USG REPRESENTATIVES GIVEN THE "CRIMINAL" APPROACH THE US HAS TAKEN TOWARD THE ARAB/ISRAELI DISPUTE AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD. NONETHELESS, HE AGREED TO LAY OUT ISLAMIC JIHAD'S POSITION ON THE CURRENT PEACE PROCESS LEST THERE BE ANY MISUNDERSTANDING. THROUGHOUT THE SESSION, "MAHMOUD" REMAINED CORDIAL AND CALM, ALLOWING POLOFF TO ASK ANY QUESTIONS.

NO COMPROMISE

15. IN A GIVE-AND-TAKE THAT LASTED ONE-HALF HOUR, "MAHMOUD" OFFERED A SCATHING INDICTMENT OF CURRENT US EFFORTS TO DIVIDE THE ISLAMIC WORLD AND OFFER NOTHING MORE THAN "CRUMBS" TO PALESTINIANS IN THE FORM OF AUTONOMY AND PERHAPS EVENTUAL CONFEDERATION WITH JORDAN. ISLAMIC JIHAD, HE SAID, TOTALLY REJECTS ANY APPROACH THAT LEAVES ISRAEL IN CONTROL OF ANY "PALESTINIAN TERRITORY-" ISLAMIC JIHAD'S GOAL IS AN ISLAMIC STATE ENCOMPASSING ALL OF THE WEST BANK, GAZA, AND ISRAEL IN WHICH ISRAELI JEWS WOULD BE ABLE TO LIVE AS "PROTECTED SUBJECTS" AS THEY HAD UNDER MUSLIM RULE FOR CENTURIES.

16. "MAHMOUD" ASSERTED THAT, IF NECESSARY, HIS CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN COULD LIVE WITH THE STATUS QUO. ACCORDING TO ISLAMIC JIHAD, THE END OF ISRAEL AS A JEWISH STATE IS INEVITABLE. HE SAID MUSLIMS HAVE ONLY TO LOOK TO THE END OF THE BRITISH, IRANIAN, AND SOVIET EMPIRES FOR RECENT EXAMPLES OF EVENTS THAT WERE ONCE THOUGHT "UNIMAGINABLE." MUSLIMS RETAIN THE KORAN AS AN UNCHANGING LODESTONE AND CAN BE VERY PATIENT, HE SAID.

NO VIOLENCE TO OPPOSE PEACE PROCESS

¶7. ASKED IF ISLAMIC JIHAD WOULD USE VIOLENCE AGAINST THOSE PALESTINIANS ENGAGED IN THE CURRENT DISCUSSIONS WITH ISRAEL, "MAHMOUD" SAID ISLAMIC JIHAD, WHILE CONTINUING TO CRITICIZE CURRENT EFFORTS, WOULD NOT ACTIVELY OPPOSE PALESTINIAN EFFORTS TO GET A SOLUTION. HE SAID THE ORGANIZATION, IN ANY CASE, WOULD NOT USE VIOLENCE AGAINST OTHER PALESTINIANS. HOWEVER, IF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES DID ANYTHING THAT SMACKED OF A SELLOUT OF ANY ASPECT OF PALESTINIAN INTERESTS, ISLAMIC JIHAD WOULD BRING TO BEAR "ALL OTHER INFLUENCES IT HAD." HE REPEATED THAT THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD IS NOT A COURSE ISLAMIC JIHAD WOULD PURSUE.

¶8. COMMENT: THE COMMENTS BY THIS ISLAMIC JIHAD REPRESENTATIVE LEAVE NO ROOM FOR COMPROMISE, IN CONTRAST TO THE BIT OF DAYLIGHT SUGGESTED BY "HAMAS" LEADER AL-ZAHAR (REF). DESPITE STRONG OPPOSITION TO THE CURRENT PEACE EFFORTS, BOTH ISLAMIC ORGANIZATIONS HAVE TOLD US THEY WILL NOT USE VIOLENCE TO STOP THE PROCESS. WHETHER THOSE DISAVOWALS HOLD UP IN THE FACE OF PROGRESS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

BROWN